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Last Meeting of The New York Archaeological Society

The last lecture of the season will be given Tuesday, March 8, at 116 West 59th Street, at 8 30 P.M. Professor Thomas D Seymour of Yale University will speak on "Archaeological Exploration and Excavation in Greek Lands". No cards of admission are required.

RITCHIE'S FABULAE FACILES

EDITED BY J C KIRTLAND, JR

In Latin more than in any other language, taught in the schools, the transition from the study of the elements to that of the literature is exceedingly difficult for students of so immature an age as that of the High School boy or girl. Caesar is the best gateway to Latin literature, but the gap between the Gallic War and the ordinary beginner's book is very wide. The summoning of the "Committee of Ten" afforded an excellent opportunity for the discussion of the question as to what should constitute the Latin reading in the schools previous to Caesar. Two recommendations were made: first, that some easy reading should be used as a transition from the elementary Latin work to the regular reading of a classic; second, that a part of the time now usually given to Caesar should be devoted to the study of Nepos.

Many teachers still believe that because the time is short, it should not be wasted in reading Latin that is not definitely set down in the college requirements. They therefore enter upon the study of Caesar at the earliest moment. But the number of those is steadily increasing who believe that the student who has completed the elementary book, even if he has done the work thoroughly, is still unprepared to enter at once profitably upon the reading of Caesar's difficult periods. If he has

courage and persistence, he will make his way through the confusion and emerge after a time with a reasonable facility in reading his Latin text, but, they urge, it could all have been done in the same time, with equal certainty and with similar expenditure of effort; and there is no educational merit in doing things in the hardest way. The difficulties found in the first Latin author should be artificially isolated and attacked one by one. It is true after all that language is living, even the dead ones, and that this process of simplifying and systematizing cannot be carried on indefinitely; but much more can properly be done in the earlier stages of the study of Latin. It will be true for some time to come that any advance made in that direction will constitute a distinct educational gain.

The effort to render the approach to the classical author more gradual and easy has appeared, as suggested above, in a variety of forms. A new avenue has been opened in that direction by Mr Kirtland's edition of Ritchie's *Fabulae Faciles*, a book now widely used in English schools which tells in simple Latin the stories of Perseus, Hercules, the Argonauts, and some of the adventures of Ulysses. Unlike Nepos or the various modified texts of Caesar, it is not based upon the work of a Latin writer; it is "made" Latin throughout. But the author has written with such care that, aside from the unavoidable brevity of the sentences and the frequent repetition of words and phrases in the earlier part of the book, the Latin is pure and idiomatic from beginning to end. It is truly ancient not only in its ideas but also in the form of their expression. Caesar in particular is drawn upon, and different as is the story from that of the Gallic War, yet upon every page are found many expressions that remind us of the Commentaries and surprise us into a new admiration of the Caesarian idiom, which can serve so admirably in these strange surroundings.

To the student, who has read this little book, the Gallic War will from the first seem almost familiar. Where Caesar's vocabulary fails, as

it often must in the rendering of Greek myth, Vergil lends aid. A few simple passages from the *Aeneid* are even quoted bodily.

The usefulness of the book depends to a certain extent upon the careful gradation with which the principles of syntax are introduced. The sentences are very short at the onset, and almost nothing is presupposed beyond a mastery of the inflections; but before the end of the book is reached, all of the most important principles of syntax necessary to the understanding of classic prose have been amply exemplified. The *Perseus* and the first of the *Hercules* contain no subjunctive. It is not until we have reached the ninth page that we find even so simple a construction as the dative with intransitive verbs. The relative clause of purpose appears first on page 19. Formal indirect discourse is found first on page 33, and on the next page we meet the first ablative absolute. The troublesome use of the subjunctive in the clause of "characteristic" is postponed till near the end of the book. Almost every construction once introduced is repeated several times. The author in the first pages shows great cleverness in producing so readable a narrative with so limited a syntactical equipment. The makers of elementary Latin books might profit by studying his ways.

The young student should early in his Latin course discover that the language is not primarily a means of grace but a vehicle for the expression of thought. He should as soon as possible, even if only at rare intervals, enjoy the consciousness of reading a page of Latin for the sake of its subject matter. If this illuminating experience does not come before his resigned belief in the exclusively disciplinary significance of Latin study becomes fixed, it may never come at all. Such a book as the *Fabulae Faciles* can be used as a means to this desirable end.

Mr Ritchie's vocabulary is such as once acquired will be serviceable during the High School course. It is taken from Caesar, Cicero, and Vergil, and the careful study of it involves no waste.

The American editor has done much to improve the book and adapt it to the needs of our schools. In accordance with the prevailing practice, he has marked the long vowels in the text. He has also made some slight changes in the original "in the way of making it approximate more closely to his rather strict notions of the standards of model prose." The

substitution of *gladius* for *ensis*, and *spelunca* for *antrum* are examples.

Of the vocabulary, for which Mr Kirtland is chiefly responsible, it is hard to say anything but good. It has evidently been prepared with great care and is neither too scant nor too full. It serves adequately the purpose of just this book and no other, and that is the best that can be said of any special vocabulary. The careful treatment of simple derivations should prove helpful.

As to the notes there is room for difference of opinion. Were it not that we are disarmed by the editor's own statement that we need not use his notes if we do not wish to, we should be disposed to say that he had written too copiously and too seriously upon a Latin text that has just been made. Fortunately he is spared the necessity of discussing different MS readings. However, with a full appreciation of the humor of the situation, the editor may still have believed that the text presented excellent examples of the most important Latin idioms and principles of syntax, and that it was better to discuss them then and there than to wait till they should be met in the classical authors imbedded in a difficult context. Certainly the position is defensible. Some warning might have been given to the overconscientious teacher or pupil who in his zeal to master the commentary may miss the chief benefit to be derived from the book, the practice in rapid reading. The notes should be used by the teacher for his own guidance rather than assigned to the pupil as a part of his daily task. The pupil with an eye single to his present need may be trusted to neglect anything that does not help him to translate the text. Help of this kind is given to him generously, though wisely.

The notes treating of the differences between Latin and English idioms are excellent. The force of the tenses is carefully explained in many passages, a matter upon which too much stress can hardly be laid. The occasional irregularities of inflection are properly noted. It is a question whether much of the discussion of word order might not better be omitted. As for the syntax, attention is regularly called to every use of case or mood that is not the very simplest. In many cases nothing is thereby contributed to the understanding of the text, but assistance is given in grammatical classification. The editor's practice is consistent throughout, and the teacher may, if he

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Editor: ERNST RIXSS, DeW C High School, Manhattan

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wishes, make large use of the commentary for instruction in systematic syntax. There are some who hold that in elementary Latin syntax should remain unmentioned in all cases where a parallel English usage is found. Adoption of this principle would eliminate large areas of Latin grammar and spoil it as a system. Mr Kirtland's editing tends to preserve the system, though this may be a concession to what teachers almost universally regard as their needs.

The illustrations are, as they should be, taken from ancient sources, and are aptly chosen.

The attractive appearance of the book gives evidence of the great care, which has been bestowed upon the mechanical execution.

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THE HEAD MASTER OF THE ROXBURY LATIN SCHOOL recently wrote the following letter to the Editor.

"Dear Mr. Kirtland:

I have spent a pleasant half hour in looking through your edition of FABULAE FACILES, and with the conviction that all beginners of Latin will owe you a debt for making available in delightful and useful form the best material I know of for first reading in Latin.

I have spent a great deal of time in trying to make the first steps in Latin less difficult and discouraging, and I rejoice that you have done so good a piece of work to the same end.

Nov. 1, 1903.

Sincerely yours, Wm. C. Collar.

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